

# week seven

***Monday***

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Mama Jackson didn't have much, but what she did have she shared freely. While living in Tanzania, I would visit her 2-3 times a week in her little mud and stick shack and watch as she lived up to her name. "Mama" had two kids of her own, both sponsored by another ministry to go to school. Mama's husband had walked out on her years before and she did all she could to raise her children to love and serve the Lord. But Mama Jackson had another passion...she was passionate about giving to others.

It took me weeks to work up the nerve to ask her about her philosophy on giving. Week after week I would come, and week after week she would greet me with tea, and oftentimes she would greet me with a surprise lunch, no matter how many times I told her I had eaten, she would have none of it, and many times, I had to find space in my belly for the meal she had prepared. And while I ate, others came. There was Mama Isaiah, and her little newborn son, who didn't have food or a job, there was Mama Jacob, and her son, there was Mama Elizabeth, and Mama Katherine, Mama Ruth, and so many others, who would wander in and out, and in and out, sometimes receiving tea, other times receiving what might possibly be their only meal for the day. I could not figure out why a woman who had so little would share so freely what little she had with so many others...and expect nothing in return.

Some might call it foolish, to give when you have so little, but Mama Jackson believed that giving out of her abundance was an instrumental part of trusting the words found in Matthew 6:31-33.

*"Do not worry then, saying, "what will we eat?" or "what will we drink?" or "what will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

For Mama Jackson, not worrying meant trusting that God would provide her with everything she and her children would need, and that sometimes she would be used to provide others with what they needed. She lived that lesson of trust each day. She chose not to worry, but instead, sought first the Kingdom of God, and shared it with others, trusting, that God would provide for her every need and the needs of her children.

*Lord, help me to trust you to meet my needs, and in turn take part in helping to meet the needs of others. Help me to see your kingdom in the faces of those who walk through my door, and greet me on the street, and whether they need food, clothes, or a friendly expression of grace help me to give it freely.*

Pam McKerring, Pastor of Mobilization

### **Genesis 2:8-9, 3:1-10**

In Genesis chapter 2, Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they did, they would die.

There are as many opinions as to what the nature of this tree was supposed to be as there are church buildings. Rather than sample them here, one of the best ways in my opinion to understand the tree is to understand the phrase “Good and Evil” as a *merism*. A merism is a simplified way of describing the whole scope of an issue by listing off a couple of its parts. We do this in English; we refer to the comprehensive nature of a thing by saying “from A to Z”, or “lock, stock and barrel”. By saying phrases like these, you don’t mean to exclude “B through Y” or the other components of the gun. Everyone immediately recognizes that you mean nothing less than the whole.

Adam and Eve were in God’s midst, which put them in company with absolute good. Now, in eating the fruit of this tree, they would be aware of all evil as well. Every potential beauty was already theirs, but now every potential harm and pitfall. Every good thing was at their disposal, but now every consequence and negative. Everything fear-able was now part of their thinking. This is what makes the first consequence of sin so interesting. They don’t start committing felonies, but begin hiding behind fig leaves and trees. From each other and God. Hiding is something fearful creatures do. You hide when you’re scared, and while you’re hiding, the anxiety grows and grows. The God-like knowledge of the whole scope of what people can do to each other, without the God-like power to overcome it, was just too much. Knowing the whole picture of all that can go wrong with love and peace between any two sides of a relationship, without the resources to make it right again; They had nothing to do but take cover. Fear was now master....it was time to hide.

Many chapters later, when Jesus died on the cross and resurrected the first day of the next week, it was no stunt to gain the necessary attention to start a movement. The celebration point was that, in Christ alone, human beings could have their lives back. Fear and anxiety outside the Garden have now given way to the Life Abundant in God’s Kingdom (John 10:10). Love has conquered all, and there is nothing to hide from any longer. The worst ultimate outcome for a person is death, and that’s been cancelled (1 Corinthians 15:51-57). Our lives are ours to live again, under the loving Mastery of Jesus Christ.

Jesus invites us out of hiding. And everything that we continue to remain afraid of, and anxious about, is a nod to that old, tired way of death that wants to put us back in fig leaves, hiding again.

Today, and for the rest of your life, evaluate your heart before God and surrender everything that you spend time and energy worrying, pacing and obsessing over. From the petty to the huge. From your personal appearance, to the pending lawsuit. This isn’t about not taking actions or giving proper thought to that for which you are responsible. It’s about deciding to not eat the fruit of worry, but of trust instead. You weren’t designed to worry, that’s why it breaks you. Ask God to worry for you, and in exchange for the tension you have offered to this point about whatever you are facing, breathe in his peace. Repeat until you feel confident that you have handed over, lock, stock and barrel, the outcome of all you fear. And then go in peace.

I majored in psychology in college and so I'm always fascinated by how people think.

Albert Ellis is a psychologist who lays out a model for how people respond to specific circumstances. He calls it: The ABC's of Emotional of Life.

"A" stands for the word, "Antecedent." These are the things that happen to me, my circumstances or my situation.

"C" stands for "Consequences" or the outcome. He defines this as how I respond or feel about my particular circumstances or situation.

Ellis says that the great illusion in life is that the things that happen to me (my circumstances) control my outcome. They dictate what I feel. So, if good things happen to me—if I get a promotion, if it's a nice day outside, if someone pays me a compliment—then I feel good. If something bad happens or even if I simply suspect something bad may happen, then my mood shifts. I begin to worry. Anxiety creeps in and can begin to overwhelm me. I become at the mercy of whatever circumstances come my way.

However, Ellis says that in between the "Antecedents" and the "Consequences," the letter "B" stands for my "Beliefs" about what happened to me. It's my beliefs about what happened to me that ultimately determine how I feel.

This is why two different people can be in precisely the same situation, can experience identical circumstances and have polar opposite responses to it. The difference rests in their beliefs.

So, as you find yourself wrestling with various circumstances today, take time to reflect on what it is that you specifically believe about God. Discipline yourself to ask yourself questions like:

"Do I believe my Heavenly Father knows what's going on?" "Do I believe that He cares about me and what I'm going through?" "Do I believe He wants what's best for me and is always leading me toward life?" "Do I believe that He's worthy of my trust?"

Pausing to reflect on those types of questions throughout the day when you find yourself in difficult circumstances help our beliefs to actually fuel our emotional reality rather than simply sitting on a idealistic, religious shelf.

Jonathan Bow, Lead Pastor

James begins his letter with an interesting blend of comfort and tail-kicking:

**James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (James 1:1-8 NIV)**

When the tough times come, it's important, according to James, to keep a healthy perspective on what difficulties can produce. But to get at the richness of what God may teach through it all, you have to go to him for wisdom. This leads us to the tail-kicking part. According to James, we can't go to God "half way". James, we should note, isn't speaking against having general doubts. He had those. We all do. It's the idea that we can go to God asking for his help, but having no intentions of receiving it because we don't believe it's there when we need it.

"God, help me through this trial" we say in our prayer, but our life and subsequent behaviors don't align at all with those words. We aren't really asking for his wisdom and guidance at all. It's just a way of checking "prayed about it" as we continue to anxiously wear tracks into the carpet because we actually have no confidence at all in a God that will act on our behalf. That's just "religion". So, we just keep on worrying, making bad decisions and acting desperately, while pretending to ask God to jump in. James word "double-minded" is translated from the Greek, "di-psycho", as in *hypocrite-brain*. Ouch.

What are you pretending to pray about, but in actuality, are content to work out on your own through your own sweat and sleeplessness? When you say that you "trust Jesus", with what do you trust him? Spiritual stuff, or everything? Intangibles, or day-to-day reality?

Maybe today it's time to be single-minded. What's it going to be? What have you subtly, or even subconsciously, decided is too big or too important for God? What'd to important to actually pray and listen about, because if you don't continue whatever foolish course you're on, it all falls apart?

Will you are to pray, our loud, something ridiculously huge and risky right now? If so, will you compound the beauty and the risk by emailing what it is your asking God for wisdom about, to a friend?

May you trust God entirely. And may you enjoy the thrill that comes with single-minded faith.

Steve Daugherty, Teaching Pastor

**All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5-7 NIV)**

You cannot get from others what can only be gotten from God.

You cannot quell your fears by propping yourself up and pretending.

You cannot make things right by employing mere willpower.

You cannot improve your life by bringing other's lives down.

You cannot explain away difficulty.

You cannot call constant worry, aggravation, outbursts of rage and anger and a metabolism perpetually bathed in adrenaline, a "life".

So,

...cast all that your anxious and worried about upon the only one that can carry it. Put your cares in his hands, because he cares for you. If it's important to you, it's important to your Father in Heaven. But you must stop demanding you be lord of it. You're only making things worse. Instead, carry peace, while Abba carries what will only crush you if you remain under it another day.

Make a list on paper of that which you're anxious about on a daily basis. Add to it as the day progresses. See the writing of the words as a transfer from your hand to his. Don't write it down if you haven't any intention of letting him actually have it. At the end of the day, perhaps every day with a new list, burn it, shred it or otherwise destroy it. May the smoke, or the fragments, be seen as your statement of faith to your Father in Heaven..."I cast all my anxieties on you Lord, because you care for me". Repeat it over and over and over until you the deepest parts of you begin to enjoy.....

Peace.